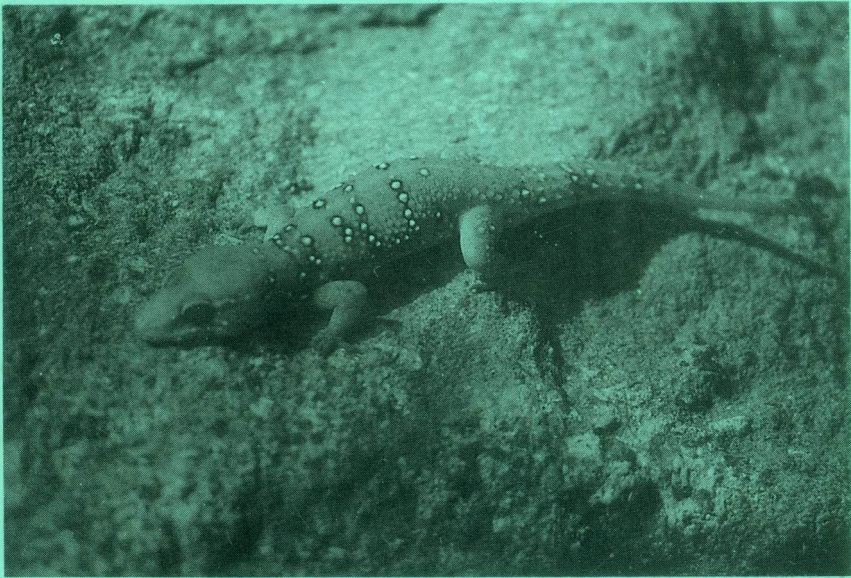


Cobra

Volume 31

January - March 1998



*Quarterly Newsletter
of the Chennai Snake Park Trust*

**CHENNAI SNAKE PARK TRUST
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Shri B. Vijayaraghavan. IAS (Retd.)
Chairman

Dr. R.J Ranjit Daniels
Hon. Secretary

Shri P.V. Laxminaryana
Dr. V. Krishnamurthy
Shri S. Subbarayalu Naidu IFS (Retd.)
Shri K. R. Venkatesan IFS (Retd.)
Dr. A.V. Gopalakrishnan
Shri M. Raghuraman
Shri V.S. Raghavan
Dr. T. Sundaramoorthy

Wildlife Warden, Chennai
(Ms. Mita Banerjee IFS)

Jt. Director, Tourism Dept.,
Government of Tamil Nadu.
(Shri S.M. Sankaralingam)

Officer-in-Charge,
Zoological Survey of India,
Southern Regional Station,
Chennai.
(Dr. P.T. Cherian)

Head, Dept. of Zoology,
Madras University.
(Dr.Jayapaul Azariah)

Editorial Committee:

Dr. R.J. Ranjit Daniels,
Editor.

Shri. B. Vijayaraghavan
Dr. V. Krishnamurthy
Dr. A.V. Gopalakrishnan
Shri. V. Kalaiarasan

Cover

Termite Hill Gecko (*Hemidactylus triedrus*)

One of the most colourful, yet common gecko in the drier parts of South India.

Photo : A. Karuppaiya

P. JEGANATHAN
C2/403F,
KAILASAPURAM
TRICHY-14

Cobra

Volume - 31

January - March 1998

CONTENTS

- 1** From the Editor
- 3** Amphibians and Reptiles of Kolli Hills
- R. J. Ranjit Daniels and M. V. Ravi Kumar.
- 6** On a collection of Amphibians from Hassan District, Karnataka - D.B. Natesh and Pranjalendu Ray.
- 13** Food Preference of *Polypedates maculatus* tadpoles
- Pranab Kumar Mallick.
- 16** *Mabuya allapallensis* Schmidt - A New Record for Kerala - Joseph Thomas, P.S.Easa and Sabu Jahas.
- 19** Occurrence of the Indian Python (*Python molurus*) Near Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu - P.Kannan, V. Gokula, G. Umapathy and C. Venkatraman.
- 20** Short Notes on Malayan Box Turtle (*Cuora amboinensis*) in Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve
- P.V. David and M.V. Ravikumar.
- 22** Correspondence - Amphibians of Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary - R. Al Ameen.

Cobra invites articles and short notes on reptiles and amphibians, their ecology, biology, natural history, conservation or other aspects. These may be of scientific or popular interest. Black and white photographs are also welcome.

Please send your contributions to the Editor, **Cobra**, Chennai Snake Park Trust, Rajbhavan Post, Chennai 600 022.

From The Editor

Dear Reader,

Sub: Chennai Snake Park Trust - Silver Jubilee Commemoration Souvenir - Contributions invited.

The CSPT was established in 1972 to promote education and research on reptiles. The work has subsequently been extended to cover amphibians also. The aims and objectives of the Trust are as follows:-

- i) To maintain and display a captive collection of snakes and other reptiles as a means of education of the public.
- ii) To undertake captive breeding of vulnerable species of snakes and other reptiles.
- iii) To promote knowledge on snakes, and other reptiles and amphibians and dispel the erroneous beliefs about them.
- iv) To aid and assist research on reptiles and amphibians.
- v) To provide facilities for the identification and classification of snakes and other reptiles and amphibians and, for this purpose, maintain a museum of study collections.
- vi) To maintain a library of books and other literature on reptiles and amphibians.
- vii) To publish scientific and semi-scientific literature on snakes and other reptiles and amphibians.
- viii) To undertake survey on the distribution and status of snakes and other reptiles and amphibians.
- ix) To provide consultancy services on snakes and other reptiles.
- x) To provide a common forum for interaction among amateur scientists and friends of reptiles and amphibians.



The Chennai Snake Park Trust has completed 25 years of existence and to mark the occasion, it is proposed to bring out a Souvenir Edition of the *Cobra*. This is scheduled for publication in July'98.

We welcome your contributions by way of articles on reptiles/ amphibians - their ecology, biology, natural history or other aspects. This may be scientific or of popular interest. Black and white photographs are also welcome. The contributions may reach us before the 10th June'98.

- R.J. Ranjit Daniels



Amphibians and Reptiles of Kolli Hills

R. J. Ranjit Daniels and M. V. Ravi Kumar

M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation

3rd Cross Street, Taramani Institutional Area,

Chennai 600 113

The landscape of Kolli Hills in the Southern Eastern Ghats comprises of a range of cool and dry hills varying in altitude from 300 - 1550 m ASL. To a large extent the area is just steep rock outcrops covered along the base by medium to dense deciduous forests. However the reaches above 1000 m and the slopes and valleys therein support a rather unique vegetation popularly called 'sholas', quite resembling the high elevation and montane evergreen forests of the Western Ghats in both structure and floristic composition. Considering an annual average rainfall of 800-900 mm in Kolli Hills, the sholas are certainly very fragile elements in this sprawling hilly landscape. Other major elements in the landscape are rice fields in the valleys, occasional perennial streams, barren and rocky areas, mixed orchards predominantly consisting of jack trees, monoculture of bananas, eucalyptus, pine and silver oak and a variety of crops including pine apple, tapioca and millets. Scattered villages and hamlets together support a more or less resident human population of around 30,000.

This heterogeneous landscape is located, as the crow flies, 50 km southeast of Salem town and just west of the Pachchamalai Hills. While rather well known for its fruits and as a summer resort, especially amongst film producers, Kolli Hills is little known for its faunal diversity. In this paper we therefore wish to highlight a few interesting features of the landscapes' herpetofauna.

During the past 3-4 years, we have visited the Kolli Hills 5-6



times. Although during this time we have not come across many amphibians and reptiles, the species that we have so far come across are rather interesting leading to speculations about the biogeography of the landscape.

Three species of amphibians are common, even during May, the hottest month. These are *Bufo melanostictus*, *Euphlyctis cyanophlyctis* and *Limnonectes limnocharis*. These were seen commonly within or in the neighbourhood of human habitation, roadsides, streams and rice fields. What is most interesting is the sighting of a single juvenile *Philautus* sp in the moist floor of a dense shola in May and 2 adults of *Rana temporalis* near a small stream bordered by a dense growth of tree ferns (*Cyathea* sp).

The treefrogs in the genus *Philautus* are typically rainforest species known largely from the Western Ghats, Srilanka and Northeast India. Except an earlier report of *Philautus signatus* from Yercaud and *Philautus variabilis* from Golconda in Andhra Pradesh, existence of the genus in the Eastern Ghats is largely unreported (Dutta, 1997).

Rana temporalis is a rainforest-stream frog widespread in the Western Ghats and Srilanka (Dutta, 1997). Its occurrence in Kolli Hills, is the first record outside its known range and in the Eastern Ghats.

Snakes are not very frequent in Kolli Hills. Only on two occasions did we encounter snakes; the first being a watersnake *Xenochrophis piscator* and the second, common cobra, *Naja naja*. Both snakes were seen at an altitude of 1100-1200 m ASL.

While discussing snakes with local elders and hunters, it emerged that *Ptyas mucosus* (Rat snake), *Vipera russelli* (Russell's viper) and a species of coral snake (which the local people know as a venomous snake) occur in this landscape. *Python molurus* (Indian Rock Python) is known from Kolli Hills, yet there have not been recent reports of it.

Common lizards are skinks *Mabuya carinata* and possibly *Mabuya macularia*. The exact identity of the latter is not confirmed as no specimen has been obtained to verify against the other similar species of forest floor skinks.



Psammophilus dorsalis is common in the rocky areas. We once came across a mating pair of *Calotes calotes* in May. *Calotes versicolor* occurs here, though not frequently.

Amongst geckos *Hemidactylus leschenaulti* and *Hemidactylus brookii* are common on buildings. *H. frenatus* is also seen. Interestingly, *Hemiphyllodactylus typus* is found all over the landscape even on buildings. This high altitude gecko's occurrence in South India is known only from the Western Ghats, especially Anamalais, the Eastern Ghats in Shevroys and Bangalore (Daniels, 1994). Outside peninsular India, the gecko is widespread in Southeast Asia. Another interesting forest gecko is the *Cnemaspis* sp that we have seen in Kolli Hills.

It is beyond doubt that a number of other species of amphibians and reptiles in Kolli Hills have been overlooked. Yet what is clear is that the landscape is a biogeographical relic. That despite its overall dry weather, it retains habitat and components of fauna rather reminiscent of the more humid Western Ghats, is reason enough to attribute high conservation value to the Kolli Hills.

Acknowledgements:

Our visits to Kolli Hills were made possible by the financial support of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in New Delhi.

References:

- Daniels, R.J.R. (1994) Notes on a rare South Indian Gecko *Hemiphyllodactylus typus* Beddome. *Dactylus* 2(4):132-133.
Dutta, S.K. (1997) *Amphibians of India and Srilanka*. Odyssey Publishing House, Orissa, pp 342.



On a collection of Amphibians from Hassan District, Karnataka

D.B. Natesh and Pranjaleindu Ray
Regional Museum of Natural History,
Sidharthanagar, Mysore.

A small collection of amphibians was made during March - August 1997 from a locality viz., Dalagowdanahally, situated between 12° - 31' and 13° - 31' north latitude and 75° - 33' and 76° - 38' east longitude in Hassan district, Karnataka. A selective, judicious collection of 23 examples revealed the presence of seven species under four genera belonging to four families of anuran amphibians. Detailed morphometric examinations showed considerable variations in adults and juveniles of same species. The range of variations was examined within individual species as described by Boulenger 1890, 1920 and Parker 1934. During the process of collection, it was observed that some species were abundant at night near water bodies because of the breeding season and availability of rain water. It was difficult to get an estimate of overall species diversity within the short span of 6 months. Nevertheless, the habitat preference of all the species was recorded at night as well as day time, when their activities were restricted to the hiding places.

Materials and Method :

Twenty three examples of frogs and toads were collected from an aquatic habitat interspersed with agricultural field in and around the study area, Dalagowdanahally in Hassan District of Karnataka. The collections were made both during day and night by hand after removing the boulders and rocks at the collection sites at day time and at night by collecting active animals near water bodies. The collected samples were compared with several examples in the field and systematically selected specimens were brought to the museum for study.



Although several hundred samples were observed in the field, only 16 samples were selected and preserved in 4 - 6 % formalin. Morphometric measurements on 26 parameters of all 16 examples were recorded with the help of dividers under stereomicroscope to establish individual variations. The identified material was deposited in the reserve collection of the Regional Museum of Natural History, Mysore for further study.

Systematic account :

Class : Amphibia

Order : Anura

I. Family : Bufonidae

i. Genus : *Bufo*

1. *Bufo fergusonii* Boulenger 1892
2. *Bufo melanostictus* Schneider 1799

II. Family : Microhylidae

ii. Genus : *Microhyla*

3. *Microhyla ornata* (Dumeril and Bibron, 1841)
4. *Microhyla rubra* (Jerdon 1854)

III. Family : Ranidae

iii. Genus : *Rana*

5. *Rana limnocharis* Boie in Gravenhorst, 1835
6. *Rana cyanophlyctis* Schneider 1799

IV. Family : Rhacophoridae

iv. Genus : *Polypedates*

7. *Polypedates maculatus* (Gray 1834)

*Bufo fergusonii* Boulenger 1892

Material examined : Three exs: SVL 39mm Female; 34mm Female; 28mm Male. Locality - Dalagowdanahally, Holenarsipur taluk, Hassan District, Karnataka. Date of collection : 3.8.97 and 31.9.97. Collector, Natesh D.B.

Head with bony cranial ridges but the ridges are not clearly cornified. Head length is half of the SVL. Tympanum less than half the diameter of eye. Parotoids roundish, as long as broad. Parietal ridges absent. 1st and 2nd finger equal in length. Toes with little webbing. Skin covered with round warty tubercles, ventral warts are smooth compared to dorsal. Dorsal tubercles are little larger than ventral.

Remarks : Small size and marbling pattern looks similar with that of juvenile of *Bufo melanostictus*, but size of parotoids distinctly differentiate the species from other Bufonids. Field observation show their abundance in the locality as comparable to the common toad *Bufo melanostictus*.

Bufo melanostictus Schneider, 1899.

Material examined : Ten exs.: SVL -36 to 53mm. Locality as noted earlier. Date of collection : 3.3.97, 3.8.97 & 31.9.97. Collector, Natesh D.B.

Distinct cornified cranial ridges. Elongated parotoid. Head length is 1/3 of SVL. Tympanum as large as eye. Two rows of larger warts present on dorsal aspect of vertebral region. Black tipped warty skin. The digital tips are also cornified. In case of sub-adult the warts are devoid of black tip. First finger longer than 2nd finger.

Remarks : Several examples were collected and characters were noted. Only two examples were selected for study. The species is very common.

*Microhyla ornata* (Dumeril & Bibron, 1844)

Material examined : Three exs, all were female; SVL - 25mm, 24mm, 23mm. Locality : as noted earlier. Date of collection : 3.8.97 & 31.9.97. Collector : Natesh D.B.

Distinct golden to earthy brown ornamental coloration on back. Narrow head and broad trunk. Beaded outer and inner metatarsal tubercle with a 1/3 web in between the toes. Out of the 3 females, one large gravid female shows ventral brown gular pouch, this character is absent in other two females. The presence of ovum inside the body distinguishes its identity as female; otherwise it may be confused with the male by the presence of brown gular pouch.

Remarks : One of the commonest frogs at night but difficult to collect due to its small size and cryptic coloration.

Microhyla rubra (Jerdon, 1954)

Material examined : Two exs, SVL - 29mm Female; 23mm Male. Locality : as noted earlier. Date of collection : 3.8.97 & 31.9.97. Collector : Natesh D.B.

Head length is almost 1/3 the SVL. Tympanum is half of the eye diameter; the inter-narial distance is also half of the interorbital distance. Male is little smaller in size than female with single pigmented vocal sac situated on the ventral aspect of lower jaw. The female shows a gradual slope on anterior region of the skull, which is not so marked in case of male. There is distinct colour demarcation on the lateral aspect starting from tip of nostril covering the outer margin of the eyelid and continue toward the groin. The lateral coloration is more of dark brown which can be easily differentiated from the light dorsal coloration and immaculate ventral colour. Dorsal aspect of lumbar region and thigh with elongated brown patches. Toes with distinct webs restricted to proximal subarticular tubercles of third and fourth toes. Two distinct elongated and flattened metatarsal tubercles, with little gap in between, present.

Remarks : Extremely rare. It was collected from under boulders at day time only.

***Rana limnocharis* Boie in Gravenhorst, 1835**

Material examined : Two males. SVL - 29mm. Locality- as noted earlier. Date of collection : 3.8.97 & 31.9.97. Collector : Natesh D.B.

Commonly known as paddyfield frogs. Head length is little less than 1/2 of SVL. Tympanum is 2/3 eye diameter. Inter-narial distance half of the eye diameter. First finger longer than second. Dorsal surface with elongated glandular tubercles but ventrally smooth. Two individuals with distinct median longitudinal vertebral stripes. Smaller one bears broad vertebral stripe, whereas larger specimen wears faint median longitudinal vertebral stripe. Both specimens possess lateral slits on their lower jaw which helps in croaking. Toes 2/3 webbed.

Remarks : Very common on the water edges. Different morphological features creat confusion in identification of the species.

***Rana cynophlyctis* Schneider, 1799.**

Material examined : Two males. SVL - 36mm. Locality : as noted earlier. Date of collection : 3.8.97 & 31.9.97. Collector Natesh D.B.

The common skittering frog was collected from water edges. Head length little more than half of SVL. Orbital diameter more than that of upper eyelid. Tympanum less than orbital diameter. The specimen shows two ventro-lateral slits on the lower jaw which distinguishes from its female counterpart. Complete webbing in between the toes, with distinct olive coloration on dorsal part of the body. Ventral coloration completely white. These are exclusively aquatic in habit, often hiding themselves in the water-edge vegetations.

Remarks : Verry common throughout the day. Floating on water and catching flying insects.

***Polypedates maculatus* (Gray, 1834)**

Material examined : One male. SVL - 40mm. Locality - as noted earlier. Date of collection : 3.8.97 & 31.9.97. Collector : Natesh D.B.

The specimen has pointed snout and distinct ventral gular sac. Ventral aspect of thigh and abdomen glandular. Head length is greater than head width. Tympanum less than orbital diameter. Dorsally smooth. Digital tips are ending with disc bearing ventromedian groove. The disc of fingers are little larger than the toe disc. The pattern of webbing is agreeing with the description of Daniel (1963). There is no extra projection on their tibial region. The smaller size may be due to the first year breeding phase.

Remarks : Verry common. During the breeding season it is found near the water edges. It was collected at night; very difficult to spot during day time.

Discussion : Daniels (1991) reported threat to amphibians especially from pesticides and fertilisers. During our observation it was noticed that agricultural fields are devoid of frogs, their population was more towards barren land with rain water pools. While studying the toads and frogs from a small locality it was observed that their abundance is related to their ideal habitat and availability of adequate food resources. The collecting localities were surveyed thoroughly to study their food preferences. The Microhylids and Bufonids share almost similar habitats whereas Ranids prefer more aquatic habitat. Daniel (1963) mentioned the distribution of *Microhyla rubra* as south India. Inger and Dutta (1980) showed its distribution as only in Assam, Kerala, Tamilnadu and West Bengal. Present record of *Microhyla rubra* from specific locality merits report of occurrence. Daniel (1963) recorded *Bufo fergusonii* from Mysore. Present collection from Hassan extends its range of distribution, where it can be easily seen during monsoon period.



Acknowledgements :

Authors are grateful to the Director, National Museum of Natural History and Scientists in-charge, Regional Museum of Natural History, Siddarthanagar, Mysore for providing necessary facilities.

Reference :

- Boulenger G.A. (1890):** *The fauna of British India. Reptilia and Batrachia.* London.
- Boulenger G.A. (1920):** *A Monograph of the South Asian, Papuan, Melanesian and Australian frogs of the genus Rana.* Rec. Indian Museum 20:1-226.
- Daniel J.C. 1963 :** Field Guide to the Amphibians of Western India. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, part 1&2 60: 415-436, 690-702.
- Daniels, R.J.R. 1991 :** The Amphibian Fauna of Karnataka. *Karnataka State of the Environment Report* 5: 79-84.
- Inger R.F. & Dutta S.K. 1980 :** An overview of the Amphibian Fauna of India. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 83: 135-145.
- Parker H.W. 1934 :** *A Monograph of the Frogs of the family Microhylidae.* London. 8+208. pp. text figs.



Food preference of *Polypedates maculatus* tadpoles.

Pranab Kumar Mallick*

Dept. of Zoology, Dum dum Motijheel College,
Dum Dum, Calcutta - 700 074.

Very little information is available on the food preference of anuran tadpoles except Mallick *et al.*, 1979 and Das, 1979. During the present study an attempt has been made to study the feeding habit and rate of feeding in different developmental stages. Various types of food have been provided, including foam-nest, right from the emergence out of the foam-nest to the metamorphosed froglets.

The foam-nest of *P. maculatus* with developing embryos collected from natural breeding ground was kept in a large nursery container with suitable quantity of water. The container was provided with *Hydrilla* plants for maintenance of oxygen supply and few water-hyacinth plants for providing shade.

It was observed that tadpoles after emergence out of the foam-nest depended entirely on the reserve yolk of their yolk sacs for two days till the appearance of oral aperture. During the present study it has been observed that the tadpoles were found to flock in batches below the soft foam-nest floating flat on the surface of water and were utilising the mass by nibbling for nourishment. The developing tadpoles resorted to a zoo-planktonic diet side by side as well as the residual foam-nest.

After five days, rows of chitinous teeth appeared on the jaws and coiled intestines developed. From this time onwards the tadpoles became vegetarian. They began to subsist on algal deposition on the bottom and

* Address for communication : - Pranab Kumar Mallick, Research Centre On Natural Science, Duillya - 711 302, Howrah, West Bengal, India.



wall of the nursery container, the leaves of *Hydrilla* and root-tips of water-hyacinth plants. The tadpoles relished leaves of the *Hydrilla* plant more than the root-tips of water hyacinth.

On experimental basis a small amount of finely pasted rotten coconut was sprinkled on the surface of the water of the nursery container. The tadpoles accepted this material and were engulfing the fragments of the rotten coconut in addition to the other vegetarian diet.

Pieces of fresh liver of adult *P. maculatus* were experimentally introduced into the nursery container tied with strings and observed that most of the developing tadpoles assembled in batches around the liver pieces and were scraping for subsistence exhibiting their non-vegetarian food preference. Eggs and larvae of red ants (*Oecophylla* sp.) and mosquito larvae were also supplied in the container. Most of them were consuming the eggs and larvae of red ants exhibiting carnivorous nature but none of them accepted the mosquito larvae as food.

Cannibalistic habit of these tadpoles was observed during the advanced stages prior to the appearance of the hind limbs. It was found that the caudal portions of the weaker tadpoles were torn off bit by bit and devoured by the healthier ones.

It was noted that the speed of feeding was rapid before the appearance of hind limbs and gradually the speed of feeding slowed down and ultimately became almost nil when the tadpoles became fully metamorphosed.

Das (1979) reported that *Rana hexadactyla* tadpoles prefer aquatic vegetation. According to Mallick & Mallick (1981) *Rana verrucosa* tadpoles prefer vegetarian, nonvegetarian as well as cannibalistic food. Mallick (1981, 1986) reported that *Rana verrucosa* and *Kaloula pulchra* tadpoles accepted dry composed food material.

It has also been observed that tadpoles of *P. maculatus* have no preference for a particular diet during their entire period of metamorphosis. Though such tadpoles depend much on aquatic vegetation, they are also found to be taking nonvegetarian food stuffs.



Acknowledgements :

Financial support from U.G.C. Grant No.F-26-1 (816)/90 SR(II) is gratefully acknowledged.

Reference

- Das, C.R., 1979. Utilisation of some aquatic plants as food by tadpoles of *Rana hexadactyla* Lesson, *Proc. Ind. Sci. Cong.*, 7(3) : 65.
- Mallick, S.C., Das, D.K., Mallick, P.K. & Biswas, G.C., 1979. Food and feeding habit of *Rhacophorus maculatus* tadpoles, *Proc. Ind. Sci. Cong.* 7(3) : 46.
- Mallick, P.K. & Mallick, S.C., 1981. Notes on food and feeding habit of *Rana verrucosa* Gunther tadpoles, *Science and Culture*, 47 : 403-404.
- Mallick, P.K. & Mallick, S.C., 1986. Effect of controlled feeding of *Kaloula pulchra* tadpoles *Geobios News Reports*, 5 : 84-85.



Mabuya allapallensis Schmidt

A New Record for Kerala

Joseph Thomas, P.S. Easa and Sabu Jahas

Division of Wildlife Biology

Kerala Forest Research Institute

Peechi-680 653, Kerala

Lizards, especially skinks, are the least studied group among the reptiles. Locality specific reports on many of the species are lacking after the original description. As a part of the herpetological survey in Kerala part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, the Muthanga Range of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary was covered for reptiles. During the survey, the Nalloor Vayal in the area was found to have a number of specimens of *Mabuya allapallensis* which differed from the forest Little Skink in having a united fronto-parietal shield (Tikader and Sharma, 1992). The species was very common in the vayal and the adjacent eucalyptus plantation, and restricted to this part of the Sanctuary. Morphometric and meristic details of the specimens collected are given in Table.1.

Inger *et al.* (1984) described a new species, *M. clivicola* from Ponmudi, Kerala. Das (1991) added *M. gansi* from Kalakkad. Murthy (1992) listed only four species of *Mabuya* viz. *M. macularia*, *M. carinata*, *M. beddomii* and *M. clivicola* from Western Ghats. Tikader and Sharma (1992) mention occurrence of five species of *Mabuya* including *M. bibroni* in Western Ghats and described the distribution of *M. allapallensis* as the States of Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Sharma (1973) discussed the specific status of the species.

The Nalloor Vayal is a marshy area located at an altitude of 865 m above MSL with grass species dominating. The area has also *Lantana* and is surrounded by dry deciduous forest. The present observation of *M. allapallensis* in Nalloor Vayal in Muthanga, Wayanad is the first record of its occurrence in Kerala and extends the range further south in Western Ghats.



Table 1 : Morphometric and meristic details of *M. allapallensis*

	I	II	III	IV	V
Total length	4.50	6.00	8.30	9.60	11.80
S-V length	2.50	3.00	4.40	5.50	4.80
Tail length	2.00	3.00	3.90	4.10	7.00
Head length	0.60	0.70	1.00	1.10	1.00
Head width	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.70
Eye diameter	0.20	0.20	0.30	0.30	0.30
Snout length	0.30	0.30	0.40	0.50	0.40
Eye-Ear distance	0.20	0.20	0.40	0.40	0.30
Upper labials	7	7	7	7	7
Lamellae under 4th toe	18	14	17	17	17
Scales round the mid body	28	28	28	28	28
Keels on the scale	3	3	5	5	5



Reference :

- Das, I. 1991.** A new species of *Mabuya* from Tamil Nadu state, Southern India (Squamata: Scincidae). *Journal of Herpetology*. 25(3):342-344.
- Inger, R.F., H.B. Shaffer, M. Koshy & R. Bakde. 1984.** A report on a collection of amphibians and reptiles from the Ponmudi, Kerala, South India, *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 81(3):551-570.
- Murthy, T.S.N. 1992.** An updated systematic index and bibliography of the reptiles of the Western Ghats, India. *Rec. Zool. Surv. India*. 91(2): 169-180.
- Sharma, R.C. 1973.** Specific status of the Skink, *Mabuya allapallensis* Schmidt (Reptilia: Scincidae). *J. Zool. Soc. India - Calcutta*. 25(1&2):150-152.
- Tikader, B.K. and R.C. Sharma. 1992.** *Handbook of Indian lizards - Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta.*



**Occurrence of the Indian Python
(*Python molurus*) Near Coimbatore, Tamil nadu.**

**P. Kannan, V. Gokula, G.Umapathy
and C.Venkatraman**

**Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History,
Kalampalayam, Coimbatore-641 010.**

Information on the reptiles of urban areas is scanty. Here we report the sighting of Indian python (*Python molurus*) at Kalampalayam about 2 km from Coimbatore city limit. On 30th March'97, the local people reported to us sighting of a python while the snake was crossing the road. The area has human settlement, agricultural field, fallow land and a few small-scale industries as well. After a brief search we could locate the snake under a *Prosopis juliflora* thicket. Approximate size of the snake was seven feet.

Similar to the present observation, a python had also been observed in March 1996 in the same general locality i.e. Kalampalayam. Both records were after heavy rain. We suspect that the snake would have been flushed out from the nearby hill forest due to heavy rains. The eastern side ie. the rain shadow area of the Western Ghats is about two kilometers away from the locality.

Python molurus has widespread distribution in India and elsewhere in Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Southeast Asia (Smith, 1943). The present observation is worth noting as it is close to the city limit of Coimbatore.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Dr.S. Bhupathy, Scientist, SACON for his encouragement.

Reference :

- Smith, M.A. 1943.** *The Fauna of British India. Reptilia and Amphibia. Vol.III Serpentes.* Taylor and Francis, London.

**Short Notes on Malayan Box Turtle
(*Cuora amboinensis*)
in Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve.**

P.V. David and M.V. Ravikumar
M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation,
Taramani, Chennai-600 113. India.

The occurrence of Malayan box turtle (*Cuora amboinensis*) was recorded during our study in the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve as a part of the project "Patterns of Distribution of vertebrate diversity in the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve" (Project 14/26/92-MAB/RE dt.16.2.94). This project was sponsored by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, GOI.

From 1994, we started our field surveys on the Great Nicobar Island. During our field survey we have seen and recorded the occurrence of Malayan box turtle (MBT) three times. We came to know that it is a rare species found only in the Great Nicobar and Assam in India (Das, 1985)

According to field experience the turtle was found in the wetlands. It feeds on small leaves and fruits (Das, 1985). The MBT found near Campbell Bay on one occasion was in a 20 year old grass field. The owner of that land wanted to clear the grass for coconut plantation. While clearing the field he came across nearly 25 MBT moving out. As a layman, he didn't know the value at all.

He could have driven away the MBT to some other place. But he instead set fire to the dried cut grass along with MBT. The MBT left were picked by some local people for their flesh. There is much demand for its shell also.

Most of the MBT are encountered in the buffer zone of the reserve. The settlers and the local people should be made aware of this and also told about its importance. Otherwise, it will lead to the extinction of such a rare species.

Generally the occurrence of this species in Great Nicobar Island is in Balu Dehra, Joginder Nagar, Govind nagar, Galathea National Park and 48 km. This report is the most recent record of its occurrence in the island.

Reference :

Das, I. 1985 : Indian Turtles: A field Guide, World Wide Fund for Nature - India, Calcutta. pp 199.



CORRESPONDENCE

Amphibians of Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary

Sir,

Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary previously called Anamalais, is located in the Western Ghats near Pollachi in Coimbatore District. It is about 958 sq. km of which 108 sq.km has been declared as National Park since 1989, which comprises of Karian Shola National Park in Topslip, Grass hills National Park in Valparai, and Manjampatty valley National Park in Amaravathi region. (Rainfall : 500 - 5000 mm; elevation : 340 - 2523m.

This area has a wide variety of habitats represented by various forest types. The general forest types available in this area are dry deciduous forest, moist deciduous forest, evergreen forest, semi evergreen forest, scrub forest, montane shola forest and montane grass lands.

List of amphibians known from Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary

S.No	Species	Habitat
1	<i>Ichthyophis subterrestris</i>	Wet Evergreen
2	<i>Ichthyophis tricolor</i>	Wet Evergreen
3	<i>Bufo beddomei</i>	Wet Evergreen, Agricultural fields and plantation
4	<i>Bufo fergusonii</i>	Scrub forest near human settlement
5	<i>Bufo microtympaum</i>	Dry Deciduous and Moist Deciduous
6	<i>Bufo stomaticus</i>	Plains, scrub near Human habitation
7	<i>Bufo melanostictus</i>	
8	<i>Melanobatrachus indicus</i>	Moist Evergreen
9	<i>Ramanella montana</i>	Moist Deciduous and Evergreen
10	<i>Kaloula taprobanica</i>	Disturbed area, Plantation and Scrub



11	<i>Microhyla rubra</i>	Dry Primary and Secondary forest
12	<i>Ramanella variegata</i>	Disturbed areas, bathrooms, habitation and secondary forest
13	<i>Uperodon systoma</i>	Scrub and human habitation
14	<i>Indirana beddomei</i>	Wet Evergreen
15	<i>Indirana brachytarsus</i>	Wet Evergreen
16	<i>Indirana diplostictus</i>	Evergreen
17	<i>Indirana leithii</i>	Moist Deciduous and Evergreen
18	<i>Indirana leptodactyla</i>	Evergreen
19	<i>Indirana semipalmata</i>	Moist Evergreen
20	<i>Limnonectes brevipalmata</i>	Evergreen and Tea Estate
21	<i>Limnonectes keralensis</i>	West Evergreen and Moist Deciduous
22	<i>Limnonectes limnocharis</i>	Water edges in forest, plains, paddy fields
23	<i>Micrixalus fuscus</i>	Moist Deciduous and Semi-Evergreen.
24	<i>Nyctibatrachus aliciae</i>	Evergreen
25	<i>Nyctibatrachus beddomii</i>	Evergreen, Moist Deciduous and Semi-Evergreen
26	<i>Nyctibatrachus major</i>	Evergreen and Moist Deciduous
27	<i>Nyctibatrachus deccanensis</i>	Evergreen and Riparian forest
28	<i>Rana curtipes</i>	Semi-Evergreen, Evergreen, Moist Deciduous and Dry Deciduous
29	<i>Rana malabarica</i>	Home Steads
30	<i>Tomopterna parambikulamana</i>	
31	<i>Tomopterna rolandae</i>	Sandy soil
32	<i>Euphlyctis cyanophlyctis</i>	All kinds of water bodies
33	<i>Euphlyctis hexadactylus</i>	Permanent water bodies in disturbed and undisturbed areas
34	<i>Hoplobatrachus crassus</i>	Temporary or permanent water bodies
35	<i>Hoplobatrachus tigerinus</i>	Inundated areas particularly edges
36	<i>Philautus beddomii</i>	Evergreen
37	<i>Philautus chalazodes</i>	Evergreen
38	<i>Philautus charius</i>	Rain Forest
39	<i>Philautus glandulosus</i>	Evergreen and Coffee and Tea Plantation



- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 40 | <i>Philautus pulcherimus</i> | Evergreen |
| 41 | <i>Philautus nasutus</i> | |
| 42 | <i>Philautus signatus</i> | Wet Evergreen and Tea Estate |
| 43 | <i>Phitautus variabilis</i> | |
| 44 | <i>Rhacophorus pleurostictus</i> | Evergreen and Moist Deciduous |
| 45 | <i>Polypedates maculatus</i> | Forest and human habitation |
| 46 | <i>Polypedates cruciger</i> | |

R. Al Ameen, A/A, 165 Jothi Nagar, Pollachi - 642 001. Tamil Nadu.

[Letter edited]

Annual subscription for 4 issues of COBRA
commencing from the date of
subscription including postage.

Inland Individual - Rs. 75/-

Inland- Institution - Rs. 150/-

Overseas Individual & Institution - U.S. \$ 10/-

Subscription may be sent by MO/DD
drawn in favour of
" Chennai Snake Park Trust"
Payable at Chennai.

Chennai Snake Park Trust
Raj Bhavan Post
Chennai - 600 022. India.

Printed on behalf of the Chennai Snake Park Trust
by aad infinitum, alwarpet, chennai 600 018.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF
CHENNAI SNAKE PARK TRUST

- i) To maintain and display a captive collection of snakes and other reptiles as a means of education of the public.
- ii) To undertake captive breeding of vulnerable species of snakes and other reptiles.
- iii) To promote knowledge on snakes, and other reptiles and amphibians and dispel the erroneous beliefs about them.
- iv) To aid and assist research on reptiles and amphibians.
- v) To provide facilities for the identification and classification of snakes and other reptiles and amphibians and, for this purpose, maintain a museum of study collections.
- vi) To maintain a library of books and other literature on reptiles and amphibians
- vii) To publish scientific and semi- scientific literature on snakes and other reptiles and amphibians.
- viii) To undertake survey on the distribution and status of snakes and other reptiles and amphibians.
- ix) To provide consultancy services on snakes and other reptiles.
- x) To provide a common forum for interaction among amateur scientists and friends of reptiles and amphibians.